

My ref:

Your ref:

Date: 26th June 2017

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Mrs Stevens
Sent by email

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Dear Mrs Stevens,

Petition Response

Following the presentation of your petition to the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee on 12th June 2017, I am writing to provide a formal response to your submission.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the clarity of your presentation and the level of detail contained in the supporting documents you provided. It is clear that this is a matter about which you are passionate and I would like to thank you for bringing it to the attention of the committee.

During your presentation you raised the matter of Priory Park Infant School and Winhill Primary School. You stated that children from within these catchments were unable to access a place at their catchment school due to the children from within The Round House catchment taking up the places. Having looked into this statement I am pleased to advise you that all children living within the Priory Park and Winhill's catchments who applied for a reception place at their catchment school were offered a place. All children on the waiting lists for these schools live outside the school catchment, therefore no children have been displaced by children from The Round House catchment requiring a reception place 2017.

Having now had the opportunity to review your document in discussion with officers, we have identified a number of factual inaccuracies which we feel it is important to correct. In addition, there are several statements which require clarification. The points in question have been collated into the attached appendix 1 and listed by page number for ease of reference.

Set out below are comments on the three options which the Campaign Group have identified

as possible ways in which additional places could be provided for children living in The Round House Primary School's catchment area for September 2017 and beyond.

Option 1 – Expansion to 2.5 form of entry (FE) with temporary accommodation for September 2017.

In order to secure permission for temporary accommodation, a Regulation 3 planning application is necessary. This process is not a shortcut, the requirements for this are the same as for a planning application for permanent accommodation. Such an application would, therefore, require a significant amount of supporting information such as transport and environmental impact assessments. Due to the level of work involved we would usually start such a process in January to ensure all the necessary approvals were in place in time for the start of the new academic year in September.

Should the planning process proceed without any objection it is likely that permission would take 12 weeks from submission. However, the Council has already received communication from families in the Round House catchment opposing the suggested expansion. We would expect, therefore, that any planning application would result in objections from those families. If this were the case the matter would require approval by the Development Control Committee; this would further delay the process potentially by a number of months based on our experience of other similar projects. Either way, approval would not be received in time to enable more children to be offered places before the start of the school year in September 2017.

Work has been carried out to cost an expansion of 0.5 FE (120 places), based on the Campaign Group's suggestion of two storey accommodation. Due to the design and structure of the school it is estimated that the project (including temporary accommodation) would cost the Council in the region of £5.5 million. This would not represent a cost effective solution, nor would it be desirable on education grounds as it would result in significant disruption to children's education, teaching and learning. As the current building is not designed to support two floors, the level of work required would mean that it would not be possible for children to remain in the building whilst it was undertaken. Therefore, a large number children would need to be relocated whilst the foundations were reinforced sufficiently to be able to support a second floor and the additional floor was constructed.

Option 2 – expansion to 3FE with temporary accommodation for September '17

Government guidance in the form of Building Bulletin 103 (BB103) sets out the site size requirements for schools. The school site does not meet the size requirement for a 3FE primary school (630 places) even if the expansion was achieved by building a second

storey as there would be insufficient external play area. As a consequence, additional hard play would be required which would, in turn, reduce the area of the playing field. Whilst a multi-use games area (MUGA) could be provided to compensate for this loss, this would add to the cost.

As with Option 1, there would be considerable disruption to children's education whilst the building work was undertaken.

If started now this project would not be complete until 2019.

Option 3 - Relocation of TRHPA and temporary accommodation for 2017

In addition to the challenges already identified relating to location of temporary accommodation, this option would also be extremely costly as we would need to re-provide the existing school and increase it in size as well as provide temporary accommodation in the interim period. The one benefit it would have over Options 1 and 2 is that it would not involve the level of disruption to children's education as it would be possible for the school to continue to operate on its current site whilst the replacement school was built. As with Option 2, the earliest date by which any replacement school would be available for occupation would be September 2019.

As will be evident, all three options identified by the Campaign Group present cost, educational and time challenges. In response, officers are actively pursuing alternative options in negotiation with developers. They hope to be able to confirm plans in the very near future for a solution which will offer additional reception places on a nearby site in time for 2018 entry. Although, I appreciate that this does not meet the Campaign Group's request for additional places to be made available for 2017, we are hopeful that this option will also allow those families to secure Year 1 places in 2018 if they wish to do so.

The CYP Committee would need to approve the inclusion of the capital investment scheme necessary to deliver this outcome in the autumn of 2017 as part of its annual review of the Council's five year rolling capital programme.

At the current time, there is no provision in the Council's capital programme for such a project. The CYP Committee would need to agree to include this within the programme. The earliest this could take place would be in the autumn term when the Committee will be asked to review and approve the new programme. This would be subject to ratification by full Council in February 2018.

I both recognise and appreciate the significant amounts of time and energy that you and the

Round House Capacity Campaign Group have invested in this matter and I am aware that you may be disappointed in this response. I would like to assure you therefore, that I and the other members of the Committee are committed to securing a permanent solution to the need for additional places for the Loves Farm community.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Simon Bywater
Chairman, Children and Young People Committee
Cambridgeshire County Council

Appendix 1;

Clarification on points raised in document submitted to Committee 12th June 2017.

Page 3

The table at the top of the page includes data about applications made to The Round House Primary Academy (TRHPA). Unfortunately, the presentation of the data is misleading. The number of applications is stated as 113 with only 60 places offered. The 113 applications include those from parents who named the school as one of their three preferences, not just those who named the school as their first preference. There were in fact 78 applications received by the published deadline in which the school was named as the first preference. As you are aware as the school has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 60, this did, however, mean that we were unable to meet 18 of those parents' preferences. Of the 18 children not offered a place at the school, 5 of live outside the catchment area.

The comment under the second table states that the school has the smallest admission area in the County. There are in fact 2 other schools with smaller admission areas (Millfield Primary and Chesterton Primary) although it is recognised that these schools are smaller.

Page 4

The paragraph in the middle of the page states that only 70% of children living in Loves Farm received their first choice. As there were 73 applications for children living in the school's catchment which were received on time which named the Round House as their parents' first preference for the 60 places available (all of which were allocated to children in the catchment area), this means that 82.1% of parents were offered their first preference. I appreciate that this is still well below the percentage achieved across Cambridgeshire.

Page 5

The second paragraph states that there is 20% more housing than was originally planned on the Loves Farm estate and that the level of social housing has also increased. It is worth noting that the school was planned and built based on the numbers and housing mix in the original planning application. It is likely that the additional housing may have contributed to the pressure on places.

Page 8

The Campaign Group's impact analysis states that the alternative school places offered to

parents is over 2 miles away and the distance will cause them difficulty. The walking distance

Is under the 2 miles statutory walking limit and the routes have been assessed as being suitable for a child to use to walk to school accompanied by an adult as necessary. In addition, our data show that a number of parents who have not been successful in gaining a place at the school have in fact chosen a school which is beyond that 2 mile walking distance. This suggests that for some parents, the distance from a school and the associated need for transport is not a concern.

The Campaign Group's analysis also suggests that the only driving route to an alternative school takes cars past the Round House. It is worth noting that there is an alternative route available to parents which does not require parents to drive past the school.

Page 9

The last paragraph lists the schools in St Neots that are full for September '17. Although this is factually correct, there are schools both north and south of the river in St Neots with reception places available for 2017 entry.

Page 16

One of the school's governors states that the expansion of the school would be cost effective for the County Council. We do not believe this to be the case for the reasons set out in the analysis of the three options put forward by the Campaign Group detailed below.

Requests from the Round House Capacity Campaign Group

Page 51 of the document makes a number of requests of the Council. These are addressed below.

1 –Why has temporary accommodation not been discussed?

We have not discussed temporary accommodation as we currently have sufficient reception places for all children in St Neots that are within the statutory 2 mile walking distance of those children's homes.

2 –What emergency options are there?

The situation does not qualify as an emergency in terms of securing planning permission for a mobile. Examples of emergencies which would meet those criteria are fire and flood.

3 –What is the current situation in Godmanchester?

The decision to host the new school at Godmanchester Primary School was the strategy agreed with the Academy Trust, due to the need for the school to open in September 2016 and the site difficulties that were identified.

The new school in Godmanchester will not be handed over in its entirety in September '17, there will be a phased occupation. As a result, the mobile accommodation will be required until October 2017 when it will be removed and returned to the company from which it is being hired.

5 –Request that the Council start work on or submit a planning application

The Council would not submit a planning application for the reasons stated previously. Additionally, the school's Head teacher and Trust have made it clear that they would only support a temporary solution to meet the in catchment demand for places contingent upon a commitment from the Council to deliver a permanent expansion of the school.